



**Subareas and Neighborhoods**  
 Serra Mesa Community Plan

**2**  
 FIGURE

# HOUSING ELEMENT

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## EXISTING CONDITIONS

After experiencing a period of rapid growth (3,825 in 1955 to 27,269 in 1970), population in the study area leveled off and declined somewhat (25,182 in 1976 and 24,400 in 1998). The decline is attributable to several factors. These include the tendency for grown children to leave home, changing life styles (fewer children, higher divorce rate) and recent emphasis on adult housing.

There were approximately 8,100 housing units in Serra Mesa in 1977, and 8,361 units in 1998. Although the community is overwhelmingly single-family in character on an area basis, 42 percent of the units are classified as multifamily. Virtually all construction since 1970 has been in apartments and other multifamily products, such as townhomes, reflecting the scarcity of vacant land readily available for residential use. Most of this new apartment construction has occurred adjacent to the Mission Village Shopping Center.

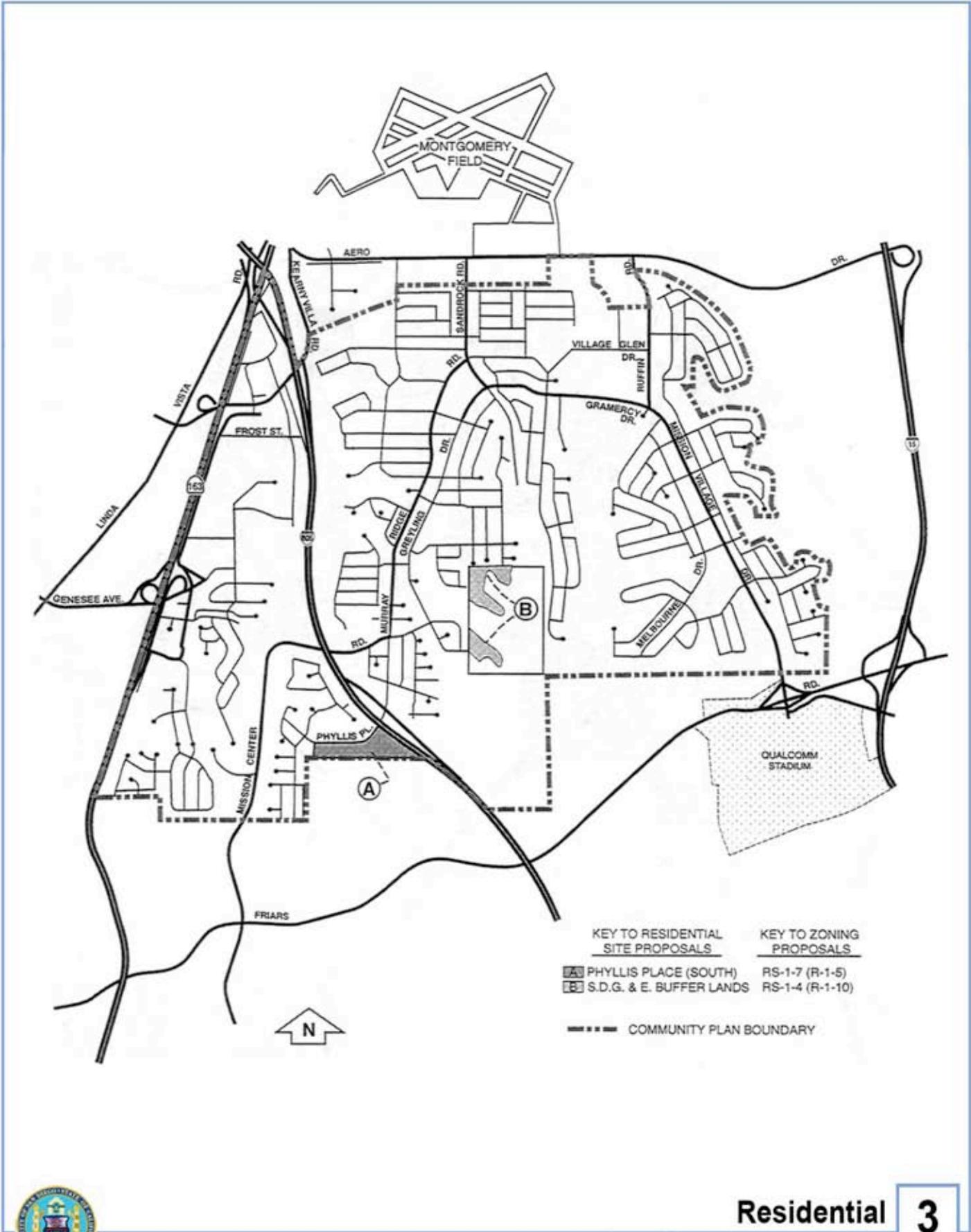
Multifamily units are clustered near shopping facilities and the health-institutional complex. These range in density from about 14 to 61 units per net acre. The 812-unit Cabrillo Heights Military Housing Project is built to a density of ten units per net acre. It provides housing for enlisted military personnel and their families. Since this housing is old, it may soon be replaced and the preferred alternative is 900 units (see **Figure 2**).

The overall condition of the housing stock is excellent, with 97 percent considered to be sound. No redevelopment is anticipated during the period through 2000, but some older units will require rehabilitation or extensive repairs.

A major attraction to Serra Mesa has been the availability of moderately priced housing. Originally, new houses sold for about \$13,000 and the median value had risen to only \$22,950 in 1970. Median home prices were over \$40,000 in 1977, and in 1990 the median value was \$173,000.

Of the 71 acres considered suitable for new housing in the community in 1977, there are 21 left, much of it located adjacent to environmentally sensitive lands. Of this land, few acres are readily developable without major landform modification. Included is a two-acre piece planned for a 51-unit retirement complex. The remaining 49 acres consist primarily of mesa rim land overlooking Mission Valley and tributary canyons. Of the 49 acres, 30 are owned by sand and gravel or related interests. These 30 acres are excluded from future resource extraction plans. The final 19 acres consist of several promontories included in buffer lands owned by San Diego Gas & Electric Company (SDG&E) and several isolated pieces scattered about the community.

It should be pointed out that 781 people resided in non-household quarters in 1977. These consist primarily of institutional facilities such as Juvenile Hall and several convalescent homes near Sharp Hospital. This figure has risen to 1,095 in 1998, with additional growth expected if further development of this kind occurs as anticipated.



**Residential** **3**  
**Serra Mesa Community Plan** **FIGURE**

Finally, the decline in household size is expected to bottom out and rebound slightly before the end of the century. Many of the “empty nesters” will likely be replaced by households with one or two children.

If the Plan is implemented, approximately 9,000 units from the 1977-unit count are anticipated by 2000. Multifamily units will probably approach parity with single-family dwellings. The 1998 population is 24,400 in Serra Mesa and is projected to grow to 25,100 by the year 2020.

## **GOAL**

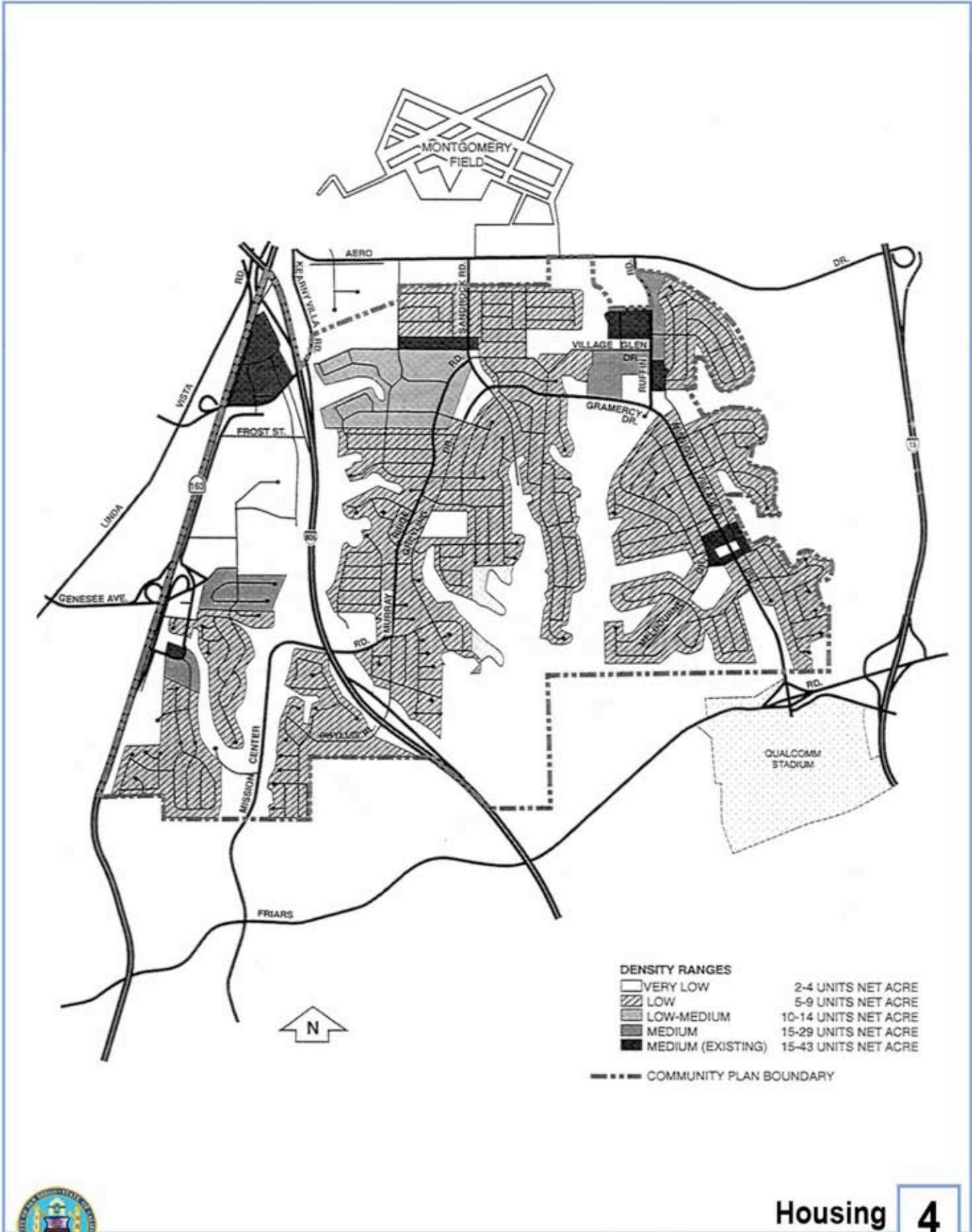
TO MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF EXISTING RESIDENCES AND ENCOURAGE A WIDE VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- Retain a wide variety and choice of housing types in all economic ranges throughout the community.
- To promote “pride in the community” campaigns to maintain and enhance the existing housing stock.
- To maintain a stable community by discouraging replacement of single-family residences by multifamily units, even along major streets.

## **PROPOSALS**

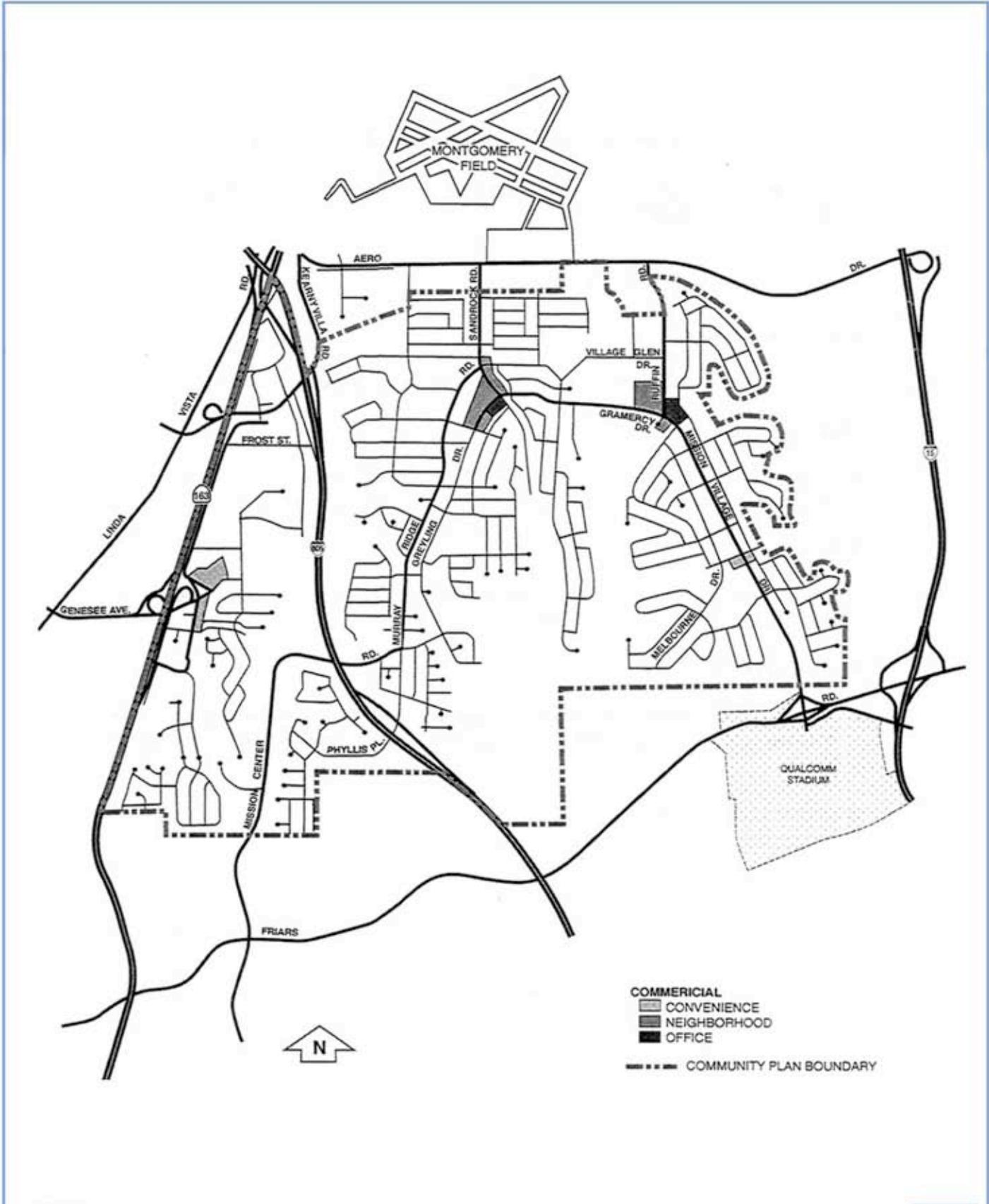
- While the Serra Mesa community is, and will continue to be, a relatively low-density area, it is proposed that a wide range of residential densities be encouraged to develop. The proposed maximum density of existing development is 43 units per net acre; that for new development, 29 units per net acre. Proposed density ranges include 15-29 and 15-43 (medium-density), 10-14 (low-medium density), and 5-9 (low-density). These density ranges will encourage single-family dwellings, duplexes, townhouses and apartments. The intent is to accommodate a wide choice of life styles appealing to all segments of the population (see **Figure 4**).
- A very low residential density of zero to four units per net acre should be applied to hillsides and canyons designated for open space but not acquired because of excessive land costs or other factors. Development in these areas, including those in the Hillside Review Overlay Zone, should be guided by the following additional criteria:
  1. Slopes of 0-12 percent should be permitted to develop up to four dwelling units per net acre.
  2. Slopes of 13-24 percent should be permitted to develop up to two dwelling units per net acre.
  3. Slopes of 25 percent or greater should be permitted to develop to no more than one dwelling unit per net acre.
  4. Slopes of 25 percent or greater should be permitted to develop to no more than one dwelling unit per net acre.



**Housing** **4**  
**Serra Mesa Community Plan** **FIGURE**

5. Slopes of 25 percent or greater should be permitted to develop to no more than one dwelling unit per net acre.
  6. Properties located in open space sensitive habitat designated areas covered by the Multiple Species Conservation Program should be developed to a one unit per ten-acre density and zoned accordingly.
- New multifamily construction should be contiguous to existing shopping facilities and multifamily developments. All such development should incorporate good design standards in relation to building location, parking and landscaping. Driveway cuts along major streets should be minimized.
  - The Cabrillo Heights Military Family Housing complex should be retained to provide affordable housing. However, if the military should relinquish ownership, transfer to public ownership or control should be guaranteed.
  - A wide variety of housing types combined with open space preservation should be accomplished by Planned Residential Developments (PRD) and the housing type should be in character with the surrounding neighborhood. This approach shall be required on the limited mesa rim lands still available.
  - The following are criteria recommended for specific portions of the approximately 21 acres still available for residential development (see **Figure 3**).
    1. South side of Phyllis Place, west of Interstate 805 (I-805), approximately six acres. This site overlooks Mission Valley. It is bordered on the south by a major sand and gravel operation. A large religious institution and retirement units are located to the north. This site is specifically excluded from extraction plans. An overriding community concern is to preserve the integrity of the single-family neighborhood located to the west of the property. The site appears suitable for low-density residential development to a maximum of seven to nine units per net acre. Development could be constrained by existing overhead transmission lines and towers. Development must be done through the use of a PRD and in character with the single-family neighborhood to the west.
    2. San Diego Gas & Electric Buffer Area (south of Kobe and Chauncey Dr. and east of Zencaro and Sandmark Ave), approximately 15 acres. This group of developable sites consists of several promontories of rim land extending into the Ruffin Canyon system. These promontories appear capable of accommodating very-low density development to two to four units per net acre. Approximately 53.65 acres, excluding the three promontory sites, are designated open space (see **Environmental Management Element**). Views are spectacular despite the overhead transmission lines and towers converging on the Mission Switching Substation.

Kobe and Chauncey Drives, Zencaro and Sandmark Avenues should be extended onto the three promontories and cul-de-sacs created. The Chauncey Drive/Zencaro Avenue promontory should include a public viewpoint and pedestrian access for the Ruffin Canyon system. Development must be done through the use of a large lot single-family Planned Residential Development (PRD) and in character with the single-family neighborhood to the north and west.



**Commercial**  
Serra Mesa Community Plan

**5**  
FIGURE